

Amendment to Specification

Towards its patient end, the catheter extends through a forward, patient end fitting connected between the end of a tracheal tube and a ventilation circuit. The catheter can be advanced through the forward coupling down the tracheal tube to enable suctioning. A flexible envelope extends between the two couplings, enclosing the catheter so that it can be manipulated through the envelope. A wiper seal in the forward coupling prevents gas from the ventilation system inflating the envelope. Assemblies of this kind are sold by Portex, Inc under the trade mark ~~Steri-Cath~~ STERI-CATH®, by Ballard Medical, Inc/Kimberly-Clark under the trade mark ~~Trach-Care~~ TRACH-CARE® and by Sorenson Critical Care, Inc. In some assemblies, provision is made for cleaning the catheter after its patient end has been withdrawn into the forward coupling. A manually-operable valve is located forwardly of the wiper seal providing a cleaning chamber between the valve and the wiper seal. An irrigation port opens into this chamber so that saline can be supplied to it, which is then drawn along the bore of the catheter by the applied suction to remove matter collected within the bore.